

BEST INTEREST CASA REPORT
CASE NUMBER: 07-JA-000

In the Interest of: Tom Jones **Age:** 1 year

Months in Foster Care: 1 year

CASA: Great CASA

Date of Hearing: October 11, 2007

Report Prepared: October 7, 2007

Date Received by CASA Office:

History:

Tom Jones entered foster care at birth. His sister, Sally Jones, entered foster care at the age of four months after she had been traumatically injured and physically abused over an extended period of time. At the time Tom was born, Sally was still in foster care and Tom joined his sister once he was released from the hospital after his birth.

This CASA was assigned as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for Tom Jones within days after his birth on October 5, 2006. This CASA has advocated for Tom's best interest for his entire life. During this time, this CASA has attended various meetings in regards to Tom as well as having the opportunity to visit with Tom monthly in his foster home.

Placements:

Tom has been in foster care since October, 2006. He has always been in a relative placement with his grandparents. Tom has adjusted very well to placement with his grandparents and appears to be happy and thriving in this environment, along with his older sister, Sally.

Visitation:

Tom's father, Don Johnson, has been scheduled for weekly visits with Tom since April 24, 2007. Don has not been consistent in his visits with Tom. He continually offers excuses to cancel the visits, which are only scheduled for two hours a week. This CASA does not feel Don displays a strong desire to parent.

CURRENT ASSESSMENT

Tom Jones:

Tom Jones is a very happy and loving one year old boy, who has been in a relative placement with his grandparents since his birth in October, 2006. Tom's older sister, Sally, is also living with their grandparents and has since December, 2005.

Tom has adjusted very well to living with his grandparents and is developing and thriving in this environment. He has formed a strong attachment to his grandparents and his sister, especially his grandmother. Tom appears to feel secure, valued and loved in his grandparents' home.

Pamela Anderson:

Pamela Anderson, Tom's mother, voluntarily signed an order to surrender her rights to both Tom and Sally Jones in Court on May 29, 2007.

Don Johnson:

Don Johnson, Tom's father, just began visits with Tom in late April, 2007, when Tom was almost seven months old. Don has been scheduled for weekly visits with Tom over the last five months but he has not been consistent in attending those visits, offering multiple excuses for their cancellation. Don's last visit with Tom was on September 20, 2007.

Don Johnson also has made very minimal progress in attaining the goals of his Service Plan. He began Domestic Violence group, but he has not participated since August 14, 2007. He now will not be allowed back until he is reassessed. He also had a domestic violence incident which involved Tom's mother. This occurred the day following the August 23rd hearing in which his parental rights of Sally Jones were terminated.

Don began his Intensive Outpatient Treatment at Chestnut only last week. He also just had his first two negative drug screens, which were on September 20th and September 28th. These are the first two screens received for Don since August 16th, in which he screened positive.

Since Tom has not had consistent contact with Don Johnson during his year of life and Don Johnson has not demonstrated a desire to parent, it is the opinion of this CASA, that it would not be in Tom's best interest to be placed in Don Johnson's custody.

Savanah Jones and Sidney Jones:

Savanah Jones, Tom's grandmother, and Sidney Jones, Tom's grandfather, have been the relative placement for Tom since his birth in October 2006. Mr. and Mrs. Jones have provided a safe, secure, and loving environment in which Tom is thriving. Mr. and Mrs. Jones have indicated they are ready and willing to adopt Tom.

Best Interest of the Child:

The following is a detailed outline of what this CASA believes to be in Tom's best interest:

1. *Where the child actually feels love, attachment, and a sense of being valued (as opposed to where adults believe the child should feel such love, attachment, and a sense of being valued).*

It is this CASA's opinion that Tom is currently in a home where he is loved and appreciated. He has developed a strong attachment to both grandparents as well as his older sister, Sally. This CASA has seen Tom showing affection to his grandmother and sister and receiving this same affection in return. Tom shows positive, age-appropriate behavior, which is nurtured and encouraged by his grandmother, and in this CASA's opinion is a result of Tom feeling loved and valued in his grandparents' home. This is extremely important for Tom since he has never lived with either of his parents.

2. *The child's sense of security.*

Through this CASA's observations in the grandparents' home, Tom exhibits a complete sense of security. Tom expresses recognition of this CASA when I come to visit by smiling and laughing. He is also now comfortable with being alone in the room with me when his grandmother is attending to his older sister. Whenever Tom needs something during my visits, whether comfort after a bump or reassurance after the dog steals his toy, he immediately goes to his grandmother for his needs. Tom appears very confident and comfortable in his grandparents' home, which I feel is a result of the grandparents providing a routine and stable environment.

3. *The child's sense of familiarity.*

Tom was placed in his grandparents' home 12 months ago, immediately following his birth. His older sister was also placed there 10 months before Tom. The grandparents' home is the only true home that Tom has ever known. Tom is very comfortable and familiar with his home and his family members.

4. *The continuity of affection for the child.*

Tom is continually shown affection by both his grandparents and his older sister. Tom also expresses much affection toward his grandmother and his sister during my visits in the grandparents' home.

5. *The least disruptive placement alternative for the child.*

It is this CASA's strong opinion that the grandparents' home would be the least disruptive placement for Tom. The grandparents' home is really the only true home Tom has known. He lives there with his sister and grandparents, for whom he has grown much attached. Tom is in a stable and loving environment and if he were to be removed, this CASA feels it would greatly hinder his development and trust of adults.

6. *The child's wishes and long-term goals.*

Since Tom is only one year old, it is difficult for him to actually express his wishes or long-term goals. From this CASA's observations, it would seem reasonable to assume Tom would prefer to remain living with his grandparents and sister in the grandparents' home. This home is a place that Tom is familiar and secure with and he has family in the home that he loves and who love him.

7. *The child's community ties, including church, school and friends.*

Since Tom is only one year old, he is not attending school yet. He does go to a babysitter when his grandmother is at work and he enjoys playing with the other children at the sitter's home. He has been watched by the same sitter since he was placed in the grandparents' home, so he has developed relationships with the same children there at the sitter's for the last year. His sister is also watched by the same sitter. Tom's sitter is very protective of Tom and he is very comfortable at the sitter's home.

8. *The child's need for permanence which includes the child's need for stability and continuity of relationships with parent figures and with siblings and other relatives.*

Tom is thriving in his current, stable and loving home. He has developed a very close relationship with his grandparents, especially his grandmother, and his older sister. Tom is allowed to express himself and is given unconditional love in the grandparents' home. It is this CASA's opinion that Tom is being provided stability and continuity of relationships with his grandparents, sister, and other relatives. Remaining with his grandparents would provide Tom with the permanency that is needed to continue the progress of his development and his trust in adults.

9. *The uniqueness of every family and child.*

Tom is a very happy and loving child. He greets me with a smile when I visit. He is very alert and active and appears to be developing as a normal one year old. He was immediately placed in foster care in his grandparents' home after he was born. This was a result of his older sister being placed in foster care about a year earlier after very traumatic injuries occurred when she was only four months old. Tom has been living with his grandparents and older sister his entire life. The family, consisting of Tom, grandmother, grandfather, and sister has developed into a traditional type structure. This CASA feels Tom's development is a direct result of the loving, nurturing, and caring grandparents he lives with.

10. *The risks attendant to entering and being in substitute care.*

This CASA feels Tom is flourishing in his grandparents' home. The grandparents' home is a stable, loving, child-centered home in which Tom is being raised along with his older sister. Tom's grandparents encourage his development and ability to express himself. I have observed Tom's trust in his grandmother and the love between the two of them. This CASA strongly feels placing Tom in any substitute care would be harmful to Tom's development and trust in adults.

11. The preferences of the persons available to care for the child.

Tom's grandparents have made it very clear that they wish to adopt Tom. This CASA believes Tom was placed in their home with the possibility of this resolution in mind. Tom's grandparents are very loving and nurturing and are providing him a good, stable foundation for his growth and development. Tom has formed a strong attachment to his grandparents and it is this CASA's belief that he feels secure and loved in their home.

Summary:

This CASA has evaluated every aspect with regards to Tom's best interest. I am very confident that Tom is thriving in his current environment. Tom's grandparents have sacrificed to ensure Tom feels safe, secure, happy and loved. Tom is very attached to his grandparents and sister and appears very content in his grandparents' home.

Recommendations:

It is this CASA's opinion that Tom is where he needs to be and that his current placement meets his needs and is in his best interest. Tom has been in foster care for his entire 12 months of life. Don Johnson has not provided full time care for Tom nor has he been consistent in making efforts to visit with Tom. Tom deserves a consistent, nurturing home. At his young age, he needs to know he can depend on adults. Don has not demonstrated that he is capable of caring for Tom. This CASA strongly believes that Tom needs permanent placement, with his grandparents. Therefore, this CASA recommends that it is in the best interest of the minor, Tom Jones, that Don Johnson's parental rights be terminated.

Respectfully submitted,

CASA

Date

CASA Supervisor

Date